

**Claims:**

5

1. A fat based confectionery product formed of at least one elongated strand of extrudate of fat based confectionery material

wherein the at least one strand of extrudate is capable of being physically handled while exhibiting a temporary flexibility,

10

characterized in that the strand of extrudate is formed to a surface area-to-mass ratio that is higher than  $8.0 \text{ cm}^2$  per gram unit with the at least one strand having a continuous total length that is higher than 80 mm,

15

the at least one strand has a curled configuration forming a continuous strand of a plurality of curls which is randomly coiled on a receiving surface without the strand breaking.

20

2. The fat based confectionery product of claim 1, wherein the at least one strand of the extrudate has a surface area-to-mass ratio that is higher than  $10.0 \text{ cm}^2$  per gram unit.

3. The fat based confectionery product of claim 1 or 2, wherein the extrudate is formed by extruding of a solid mass of a fat confectionery material which is pressed under pressure through a die and at a temperature of less than  $30^\circ\text{C}$ .

25

4. The fat based confectionery product of any one of the preceding claims, wherein it has a volume occupancy of more than  $2.5 \text{ cm}^3/\text{g}$ .

30

5. The fat based confectionery product of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the strand of extrudate retains its temporary flexibility at least during 3 minutes after extrusion.

35

6. The fat based confectionery product of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the fat-based confectionery material is dark, milk or white chocolate, compound or couverture.

7. The fat based confectionery product of claim 6, wherein the fat-based confectionery material contains between 3 and 8% by weight milk fat and a total fat content between 26 and 40% by weight.

5        8. The fat based confectionery product of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the cross-sectional shape of the extrudate is a circle, a star, a triangle, a rectangle, a rounded rectangle, a polygon or a non-symmetrical shape.

10       9. The fat based confectionery product of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the at least one strand has a length greater than 100 mm.

10       10. The fat based confectionery product of any one of the preceding claims, wherein the at least one strand has a length greater than 500 mm.

15       11. The fat based confectionery product of any one of the preceding claims, wherein it comprises several strands of extrudate obtained by parallel extrusion and forming an extruded product of intermeshed and curled configuration of strands.

20       12. A food product made of the association of a fat base confectionery product according to any of claims 1 to 11 and at least one other edible item for receiving the fat based confectionery.

25       13. A food product according to claim 12 wherein the edible item is ice cream, pastry, solid confectionery product or combinations thereof.

25       14. A food product according to claim 12 or 13, wherein the edible item serves as a support for receiving the fat based confectionery product.

30       15. Method for conveniently delivering a decorating, easy-to-handle confectionery product of enhanced melt-in-the mouth properties, at a foodservice outlet, characterized in that it comprises forming of at least one ductile elongated strand of extrudate of fat based confectionery material which is capable of retaining its extruded cross-sectional shape and has at least a temporary flexibility; by extruding a mass of fat based confectionery material and depositing the at least  
35       one strand of extrudate in a curled configuration with the at least one strand having a continuous total length of multiple curls that is higher than 80 mm without the strand

breaking; wherein the strand is extruded through a die to form at least one strand of surface area-to-mass ratio that is higher than 8.0 cm<sup>2</sup> per gram unit.

5 16. Method according to claim 15, wherein forming the at least one elongated strand of extrudate comprises  
providing a solid fat based confectionery mass,  
submitting the solid fat based confectionery mass to a pressure in an extruder at a temperature of less than 30°C,  
10 passing the solid fat based confectionery mass through a die of predetermined cross section to make at least one strand of product,  
optionally, cutting the strand at the desired total length and,  
receiving the at least one strand in a serving container or onto a food item.

15 17. Method according to claim 15 or 16, wherein it further comprises serving the at least one strand while still exhibiting its temporary flexibility.

18. Method according to any one of claims 15 or 16, wherein  
the solid fat based confectionery mass is provided in a metered amount and  
is deposited in a barrel of the extruder, then, pressure is exerted in the extruder by  
20 action of a piston or a screw pushing the mass in the barrel through the die.

19. Method according to claim 15, wherein  
the at least one strand of extrudate is received on a sliding ramp that gently  
directs the at least one elongated strand of extrudate to the serving area.  
25

20. Apparatus for on demand dispensing of a decorating, easy-to-handle fat based confectionery product comprising:  
barrel means for receiving a predetermined amount of fat based confectionery material,  
30 a pressure engaging means for engaging under pressure the fat based confectionery material contained in the barrel means,  
characterized in that  
it further comprises die means arranged for producing at least one elongated  
strand of the fat based confectionery product to an area-to-mass ratio that is higher  
35 than 8.0 cm<sup>2</sup> per gram unit, and

control means for actuating the pressure engaging means with the barrel means upon the push of a button and for extruding the at least one strand of the fat based confectionery.

5        21. Apparatus according to claim 20, wherein it further comprises:  
at least one hopper to store the fat based confectionery material,  
dosing means to dose the fat based confectionery material from the hopper  
and,  
10       chute means to collect the dosed fat based material and funnel it into the barrel  
means.

22. Apparatus according to claim 20, wherein, upon the push of a button, the  
control means is configured for controlling the actuation of the dosing means to dose  
a fat based material from the hopper before actuating the pressure engaging means  
15       with the barrel means and extruding the at least one strand of the fat based  
confectionery.

23. Apparatus according to claim 21 or 22, wherein it comprises a plurality of  
hoppers for storing a range of fat based confectionery material.  
20

24. Apparatus according to claim 22, wherein, upon the push of a button, the  
control means is configured for selectively controlling the actuation of the dosing  
means to dose the selected fat based confectionery material from said hoppers  
before actuating the pressure engaging means with the barrel means upon and  
25       extruding the at least one strand of the fat based confectionery.

25. Apparatus according to any ones of claims 21 to 24, wherein each dosing  
means is an auger.

30       26. Apparatus according to any ones of claims 20 to 25, wherein the die  
comprises at least one outlet having a perimeter length comprised between 1.6 and  
200 mm.

27. Apparatus according to claim 26, wherein the die comprises at least one  
35       outlet having a perimeter length comprised between 3.0 and 25 mm.

28. Apparatus according to any ones of claims 20 to 27, wherein

the die comprises an outlet of diameter of less than 3.5 mm to form a rod of extrudate.

29. Apparatus according to any ones of claims 20 to 28, wherein  
5 the die comprises an outlet of slot shape of height less than 1.2 mm and width more than 5.0 mm to produce a ribbon of extrudate.

30. Apparatus according to claim 29, wherein  
10 the die comprises an outlet of slot shape of height less than 1.0 mm and width more than 6.0 mm to produce a ribbon of extrudate.

31. Apparatus according to any ones of claims 20 to 30, wherein  
15 the die comprises multiple outlets of individual cross-sections, the outlets being separated from at least 1 mm from each other to extrude discrete strands of extrudate.